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SUBJECT: Visit to Arica: Strong Bilateral Cooperation on the
Chilean-Peruvian Border

¶1. Summary: The Ambassador got a close-up view of the close ties Chile has with southern Peru during his November 14-17 visit to Arica. Local leaders noted the close integration between people and business and excellent law enforcement cooperation. The Ambassador met with local officials, university faculty, and experts in education, international property rights, energy and environment, and agriculture, and his visit received broad media coverage. End Summary.

¶2. Accompanied by the Press Attach????, a DEA Chemical Diversion Investigator, and a Consular Officer, the Ambassador visited Arica, just a few miles from the Peruvian border. In a series of meetings with the Mayor, the Intendente (governor), and University of Tarapaca Faculty, local authorities emphasized that Peru is a good neighbor. The border region does not share the tension that exists in the two capitals that has been the topic of news headlines. Arica and Tacna (Arica's sister city in Peru, just across the border) have close and long-standing economic ties and enjoy a high degree of law enforcement cooperation. Chileans and Peruvians alike regularly travel between the two cities for tourism, shopping, dining, and business opportunities, and local leaders only expect that those ties will continue to grow.

¶3. Arica's relative economic decline is of great concern to local business, education, and political leaders. Arica's population has been falling in recent years, regional unemployment (over 10%) is among the highest in the country, and most university graduates abandon Arica for Santiago or Iquique/Antofagasta where employment opportunities are better. Arica has no significant mining industry base; leaders rely on its gateway status for trade to Peru and Bolivia, its good beaches, its tourism resources, and its four-season agricultural potential as possible engines for future growth.

¶4. In a discussion on border security and counternarcotics at the Chaculluta Port of Entry with the head of the Policia de Investigaciones de Chile's (PDI) Organized Crime Unit, the PDI thanked the Ambassador for the law enforcement assistance offered by DEA and FBI. U.S. agents have worked closely with their Chilean counterparts for years in the region on counternarcotics efforts, conducting training classes and sharing information in specific cases. As in a previous visit to Iquique, GOC law enforcement officials noted a significant surge in illicit cocaine shipments from Bolivia. GOC law enforcement officials also stated that the economy of Arica depends heavily on the large number of Peruvians who work in the agricultural sector, especially in the fertile Azapa valley south of Arica. There are more than 4,000,000 border crossings annually, including more than 830,000 crossings by Peruvians with work permits. Managing the flow of these workers and tourists without disrupting the economy and maintaining security is a top priority for Chilean and Peruvian law enforcement

agencies.

15. While at the Peruvian border, the Ambassador was briefed on Chilean demining activities in the area around Arica. Chile has had an active demining program since 2004 and has successfully deactivated thousands of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines along the border with Peru and Bolivia. The program, using a sifting excavator and other heavy equipment on loan from the US, has promoted goodwill with the neighboring countries, and the protocols followed to protect civilians during the demining operations are a visible example of close interagency cooperation between civil and military authorities in Chile to achieve an important humanitarian objective.

16. Education was a topic that frequently was mentioned during the Ambassador's visit. The Ambassador promoted the Youth Ambassador program at both the North American College and with Arica Mayor Waldo Sankan. Mayor Sankan is emphasizing English education and international exchanges in the region, including a goal to establish bilingual public schools over a period of years. The Ambassador also met with students in the American Corner at the University of Tarapaca.

17. In the last two years, the Embassy has actively supported

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) initiatives in Arica, including seminars for prosecutors and investigators on piracy and counterfeiting in the region and a seminar for judges on the judicial experience in the United States of prosecuting intellectual property crimes. A direct result of these efforts are new courses at the University of Tarapaca law school aimed at protecting intellectual property rights. The University of Tarapaca is the first in Chile to offer IPR academic programs and is working with the city of Arica to support IPR programs for students in local public schools. In an IPR Roundtable at the University of Tarapaca, Ambassador Simons congratulated the faculty on their accomplishments.

18. Another key focus of the Ambassador's visit was energy and the environment. On November 16, the Ambassador spoke to more than 85 faculty members, students and local leaders at the Universidad de Tarapaca's Saucache Campus on "Chile-U.S. Bilateral Relations: The Future of Energy and the Environment." The speech, which highlighted the Obama Administration's energy and climate change policies, generated a lively question and answer session that showed the interest of the audience in these areas. Separately, the Ambassador toured a solar house that university students and faculty are constructing; met with a private company that is conducting research on new plant species that produce higher yields and are more heat and drought tolerant; and talked with local government about projects focused on energy efficiency and solar power.

19. Ambassador Simons also met with 21 members of the local American community, former Fulbright and IVLP participants, and indigenous rights leaders. The Ambassador gave interviews to La Estrella de Arica and Radio Cappissima, and he appeared live on Arica TV's morning talk show. The trip to Arica generated a high degree of interest from the media and local officials. Local press were present at several key locations during the Ambassador's visit and asked questions ranging from what is the USG view of Chilean presidential elections to inquiries about the Ambassador's interest in education and environmental policy.

SIMONS